

Remarks in a Roundtable Discussion With Leaders of the African-American Community in Los Angeles

May 7, 1992

Rev. Edward V. Hill. May I give the ground rules, please. The persons who are seated in this assembly have been selected, a cross from young people to business people to leaders. The President wanted to meet just a few. He will not have an opportunity to hear a long question, but if you can make short your statement, the President of the United States would like to hear you.

Mr. President, we are honored again to have you.

The President. Reverend Hill, let me—I would never, ever correct E.V. Hill, especially in his own church in its centennial year, but rather than questions, and I will be glad to answer them, what I really would like to get is the heartbeat of the community, hear from you all as to what you think can best help, where matters stand.

It's hard on a short visit to get all this. I will assure you, and I hope that Pete, sitting here, and Tom Bradley would agree, that we have tried to bring Federal resources to bear in a timely fashion. It's been done pretty low-key in the sense that the Federal officers out here have been not seeking a limelight. But under David Kearns they've put together a good task force. And I've been very gratified that the leaders, both from city council and the Mayor's office, as well as the Governor's office, feel the Federal Government is responding, whether it's from FEMA or whether it's from Jack Kemp's HUD or whether it's from Lou Sullivan's HHS or the Department of Education. Leading the fray was Pat Saiki, out here very early for the SBA, small business loans.

So I don't want to go into all these programs, although I'd be glad to have our experts respond to any questions on them at all. But what I'd like to do is, first, to say thank you; second, to let you know that justice will prevail, that we will follow through with my responsibilities under the law, and the Department of Justice is following through on the justice side of the equation

to examine, to see if civil rights of anybody have been violated, King or anybody, Rodney King or anyone else, that there be fair-play and equity there.

But having said all that, let me tell you something, and you know it better than I. There is no way, really, I guess, that the President can come here in an every-4-year situation and not have it be accused by some of being political. I don't want it to be political. I want to get by this. We've got plenty of time later on in the year for the politics. I want to hear from you, just all the bark off as to what you think we can do, and please speak frankly about it.

If your comments have a political ring it will not offend because, as I say, it's a hard year to stay out of it. But we're here to help, and we're here to learn. And that's it.

[A participant spoke on local oversight of funding allocations.]

The President. That's a good opening comment.

[A participant requested assistance to rebuild his small business.]

The President. May I make a comment on that, Reverend?

Reverend Hill. Yes.

The President. Because there are a lot of others like you, and you're not here as a special pleader. The Federal Government can in a situation like this be of real assistance. It is largely through SBA, but perhaps other facilities, Agencies can help, too.

Clearly this is one, this type of experience is one where the Federal Government has resources available, pumping them in now. I outlined the programs last night. I won't go through them here, although Pat Saiki is here now. And to others like you whose life has gone up in smoke, we can get assistance, no strings attached to it, largely through SBA but not only SBA.

And so we can get, in your case obviously, somebody in touch with you. But others

like you, the Small Business Administration and other Federal Agencies can help. I know that Pete or Tom Bradley can speak for the city. But this is clearly one where we have the resources.

[A participant spoke on local investment in the rebuilding effort.]

The President. Let me comment on that one. I strongly agree with that concept, and we will, again, push for the concept at the Federal level. But I am told by city officials that you are absolutely correct, that where ownership has been involved, there has been much more respect for property. And certainly this concept of ownership in the community, the businesses, is something I strongly endorse. And we will find ways to implement that at the Federal level, I promise you.

[A participant spoke on assistance for community child development programs. Another participant spoke on the dissemination of information about available assistance.]

The President. The things we're trying to work out for the Federal Government is that kind of, like a what you call a one-stop-shopping approach. And David Kearns, who is our number two in the Department of Education—some may remember him through his work with the Urban League and others when he was the chairman of Xerox, a very large company, but a great manager—is working that problem right now. And it would include not just the kind of services that this lady talked about, but all of it, including what the private sector can do to help. I know Peter Ueberroth's getting involved in that, and we have a national office on that. But I think that the plea here is a very good one for letting people know what's out there.

[A participant spoke on the destruction of community organization facilities.]

The President. May I ask you a question before you sit down? And it may be an impossible one to answer. But here's 100 Black Men, a respected organization that has no enemies. Why would someone target—no matter what the rage, why would somebody target that building? We've seen this gentleman—what's your name again?

Participant. Dereke.

The President. Yes, Dereke. He was telling me this morning, he was the one I was referring to about who saw one of his own employees taking stuff out of the store. We went around and talked about the ownership and the different facilities there. One was a dentist's office. The dentist and his wife stood out there with a dog trying to keep people from coming in and taking—where is he—Dr. Faulkner right here. An amazing story. But why? Maybe that one is messed up because it was next door to a supermarket where people can go and get food. But why the 100 Black Men, why would somebody destroy that building? Can you—

Participant. The only thing that I think that it might have had—the city was leasing the building. It might have had the city emblem up there, I don't know. But I want to just conclude with the fact that the Young Black Scholars, a model program that is really being modeled by the State now with senate bill 1114, and it also reflects the Education 2000 vision that you are really pushing forward.

[A participant spoke on job training. Another participant spoke on Federal aid for infrastructure improvements and employment of arrested rioters in cleanup efforts.]

The President. Thank you, sir.

[A participant spoke on minority business opportunity. Another participant asked about small business loans for rebuilding churches.]

The President. I think the answer would be yes, but do you know the answer to that, Pat, whether SBA can apply to the reconstruction of churches?

Administrator Saiki. We'll look into it, Mr. President.

The President. She doesn't know offhand, but it ought to and we ought—there's a place, if we need change, there's something we ought to change.

[A participant spoke on youth programs targeted at gang members. Another participant spoke on comprehensive, prevention-

oriented aid and mentoring programs. Other participants spoke on welfare reform, job discrimination, educational development programs, and family involvement in education. Another participant asked about the processing time for SBA loans.]

The President. No, we have given instructions to Pat Saiki, who is here, to speed this process up. Now, I hope we're success-

ful. We will keep on it to see that we are. You might ask her just on this one specific—right behind you—because that is the underlying as to what we're trying to do here, and it is very, very important in the reconstruction.

Note: The discussion began at 9:30 a.m. at Mount Zion Missionary Baptist Church.

Remarks in a Roundtable Discussion With Leaders of the Korean Community in Los Angeles

May 7, 1992

The President. Are you going to say something, or do you want me to go ahead? Let me just say thank you to the community leaders assembled here. And let me single out Mr. Lee for his hospitality not just to us today, to Secretary Sullivan, the Governor, Senator Seymour, Secretary Kemp, Pat Saiki of SBA, but to so many.

This place has become not just a command center in times of turmoil, turmoil that every American regrets. This President, I'll tell you, my heart aches for those who have lost their jobs. But this community is strong. I wish all you guys would walk with me—maybe you've been there and seen the volunteers in the next building. It's unbelievable, 200 out there this very day, 200 to be trained; 180 of the 200, I'm told, are CPA's willing to pitch in to help do what's necessary to reconstruct.

I look at this in a very broad sense, not only in terms of families that were hurt but in terms of international. I think most people here will concede and rejoice in the fact that we have good relations with Korea, something I take great pride in, incidentally.

I think people in Korea share the same hurt that all of us do when they look and see this community of enterprising individuals that David reminds us came here, what, some 25 years ago, some more recently; got in, grabbed a piece of the American dream, and built something. To see it shattered is not the American way. And I will do everything I can to show our friends abroad as well as here that it's not the American way.

And with that in mind, it means I want to help. It means the Federal Government is prepared to help in every way we possibly can.

I want to go back to the volunteer concept that I mentioned a minute ago. That is also part of the American way. I'm sure it's part of the Korean way as well. But when you see one American reaching out to another in times of hardship, that is one of the things I think is very precious about our society. And the spirit of those volunteers out there, it's amazing. One of them actually hit me up for a little donation. [Laughter] I might say I understood perfectly, and in a modest way was able to contribute to this volunteer sector.

Let me just go into a couple of problems. This has been a command center. I understand that some in the community were unhappy by the location of the disaster relief center. And by early next week, that unhappiness should give way because we are going to have a new, acceptable location to serve the needs of the community. And I understand that not having forms in Korean is a problem, and now there's efforts going on to be sure that those forms are printed in a way that can be understood in Korean so they can be understood by those small family operators that have suffered because of these uncontrolled forces.

We also realize that translators are a problem, and we are working to provide